

Methodists figured in early

Settlement of Indiana

Historically Speaking

TS OCT 7 1979

By Dorothy Clark



The real settlement of Indiana began after the close of the Wayne campaign in 1794 with an influx of settlers coming from Kentucky, Virginia, Tennessee and North Carolina. By 1800, it is estimated that about 5,000 persons had come into the southern half of Indiana.

Many of these people came from Kentucky where there had been a period of marked revival among the Methodists. These Methodist settlers brought their Methodism with them and began to set up Methodist classes in their homes.

Previous to 1801, the Methodist conference in the Western Country was known as the Kentucky Conference, but in 1801 the name was changed to Western Conference, which lasted until 1813, when it was divided into Ohio and Tennessee Conferences.

In the year 1801, the Kentucky District of the Western Conference contained nine circuits, taking in the settlement of Kentucky and present state of Ohio. None of these circuits took in Indiana Territory, and there were no official Methodist Societies in Indiana Territory at that early date, but there were undoubtedly Methodist services conducted and Methodist preaching by local preachers who came into the Indiana Country among the first settlers.

The first reliable record of

Methodist preaching in Indiana was in 1801, at a village called Springville, located in what was then known as Clark's Grant or "The Grant."

Two local preachers, Samuel Parker and Edward Talbott, crossed the Ohio river and conducted a two-day meeting at this place. This was evidently a part of the great revival movement then under way in Kentucky and Tennessee.

William McKendree, the Presiding Elder of the Kentucky District, established the first official Methodist class ever formed in Indiana Territory. In the summer of 1802, Andrew Mitchell took McKendree across the Ohio river in a canoe and on this trip two classes were organized in what is now Clark County, one at Charleston, the other at a place called New Chapple.

The name Indiana appears in Methodist history for the first time in 1808 when the new Indiana District was added to the Western Conference with six circuits: Illinois, Missouri, Cold Water, Maramack, White Water and Silver Creek, the last two being the only circuits in Indiana Territory.

In the beginning, of course, there were no meeting houses, but in the winter time the cabins of the settlers were the temples, and in the spring just as soon as it became warm enough, the people worshipped out under the trees.

Soon log meeting houses began to be erected, for there was plenty of material, and a Methodist revival always resulted in willing hands to build the desired house of worship. The roofs of the log meeting houses were made of clapboards held on by weight poles. The floors were made of puncheons, the chimneys of sticks and clay, and the seats of split logs, hewn smoothly with an axe, while the pulpits were made of clapboards, smoothed nicely with a drawing knife.

Practically all of the early circuit riders traveling in the new country were single men, for Bishop Asbury discouraged marriage among his preachers. He knew the increased hardships marriage would bring to the preachers themselves and especially to their wives.

For this reason, many of the pioneer preachers ceased to travel, as it was called, while they were

comparatively young men, simply because they married, and were advised to "locate." That is, they settled down in a certain locality and ceased to travel a circuit, though they did not cease to be preachers.

At this early time, \$64 to \$80 was the yearly amount allowed the traveling preacher, and he must provide his own horse and saddle, saddlebags, etc.

The early circuits in Indiana were six to eight week circuits, that is, it took the circuit rider from six to eight weeks to make the round of his various preaching places once. That meant that there was preaching at the regular preaching place not more than once in six to eight weeks.

At least four times yearly came the quarterly conference meetings on every circuit, and on these occasions the Presiding Elder would work a week or more, and sometimes make the whole round with the circuit preacher. These were the great meetings to which both preacher and people looked forward for weeks and months ahead. Usually beginning on Saturday afternoon, they lasted through, with little intermission, until Monday morning. Many of the early circuit riders had no homes but lived in the cabins with the settlers or in the saddle.

In 1808, Peter Cartwright came up to Bussroe to offer disputation with the Shakers who had been proselyting among the Methodists who had moved up onto that territory. When the Shakers failed to offer him direct combat, he turned his attention to

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organizing what Methodists there were into a Class in the Bussroe Community and won back some who had gone over to the Shakers.

This was the first Class in this area and numbered 47 persons. They were temporarily supplied with occasional preaching until 1811 when they were regularly included in the Vincennes Circuit, at that time under Thomas Stillwell.

The Vincennes Circuit first appeared in 1809 with William Winans in charge. In 1810 there were 125 members listed. Winans was followed by Stillwell in 1811, Jacob Turman in 1812, Richard Richards in 1813, Azehariah Whitten in 1814, John Schrader in 1815, Thomas Davis and James McCord in 1816, and Schrader again in 1817.

In 1815, Schrader came to Gill's Prairie and established a Methodist Class and preaching place at the home of William Burnett. This Class included William and Mary Burnett, William and Anna Gill, James Black and wife, Berry and Elizabeth Taylor, Deborah Graham, Catherine Strain and Patty Hollenback.

The next year James McCord continued the preaching at Burnett's until Burnett moved to near where New Lebanon now stands. Here the Burnetts and Taylors formed a Class of four members.

The following year Schrader became the preacher and added to the Class: Henry, Charlotte, John, Jane, William and Margaret South; Christian and Nancie Canary; and David and Sarah Howard, a total of 14 members.

In July, 1818, Father Wallace and Presiding Elder Jesse Hale held the first Mt. Zion camp meeting, often called the Bark Camp Meeting because the camps were covered with bark from the trees in the neighboring forests.

The same year a Community Meeting House was erected in Carlisle and used by the Methodists for church purposes. According to the late Dr.

Maple, this was not the first church in Sullivan County, for the Hopewell Presbyterian Church had been erected in Turman Township in 1817, one year prior to the Carlisle building.

Possibly some early Methodists may have been missed, but God has their names and will remember.

Much of local history

linked to story of churches

The history of any community can be read through the history of its churches, and this statement is certainly true for Terre Haute and Vigo county.

St. Joseph's church is called the "mother church" of all Catholic churches in Terre Haute. The first St. Joseph's church is said to have been built by Father Buteux in 1837-38. It was then a mission. Dedicated in 1840, Rev. S. P. Lalumiere was the first resident pastor as early as 1842.

The German Catholics of Terre Haute wanted a church of their own. They had previously attended St. Joseph's. On Oct. 2, 1864, the cornerstone for St. Benedict's was laid, and the new church was dedicated in 1865. The Benedictine Fathers assumed charge of the church, and in December, 1865, Rev. C. Doeblener was appointed pastor.

St. Ann's parish was organized in Terre Haute in 1866. It had under its jurisdiction St. Ann's Orphanage, which was St. Ann's Hospital during Civil War days. Rev. Michael Quinlan was the first priest.

St. Patrick's church, on South Thirteenth Street, was organized in 1881. Rev. Thomas X. Logan was the first pastor.

St. Margaret Mary's church was established in 1920, with the Rev. Clement Thienes as organizer and pastor.

Sacred Heart church was opened in 1924 with the Rev. Aloysius Duffy as pastor of the parish.

Protestant churches

The Baptist church of Terre Haute was organized about 1838, although there were Baptist churches in Vigo

county in 1822. Rev. Samuel Sparks was the preacher for eight years.

Services were held in private homes, the court house, and the old school house until 1847 when the first church was built on North Fourth Street, between Eagle and Mulberry streets. The Baptist church on the southwest corner of Sixth and Walnut was built in 1914.

Centenary Methodist church was organized in 1865, and a church was built at Seventh and Eagle streets.

United Brethren Missionaries located in Terre Haute in 1861, and their church was organized in 1865. A frame church was built and used until 1893, when a brick church was built.

The first Christian Science services were held in Terre Haute by a man and his wife who had become interested. They read the entire service together, including the hymns. The Christian Science church was organized in 1902, services were held in private homes; later a reading room was opened over Paige's Music Store, and a Sunday school was started with three pupils and one teacher.

In the early 1860's, only a few Jewish families were in Terre Haute, but a religious organization was formed and services were held in rented rooms at the corner of Fourth and Walnut. A new organization was formed in 1882.

The German Reformed church on South Fourth was purchased in 1890, where services were held until Temple Israel was built in 1911 on South Sixth St.

Abbott's report

According to Dr. Lyman Abbott's reminiscences, Terre Haute in 1860

By Dorothy Clark

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TERRE HAUTE, INDIANA

was a town of 18,000 inhabitants. It had two Methodist churches, one Baptist, one Episcopal, two Presbyterian (one of them old school, one new school), a Campbellite, a Universalist, a German Lutheran, and a Roman Catholic, in addition to the Congregational, where he was temporarily called.

On May 17, 1828, Rev. David Montfort organized the first Presbyterian church in Terre Haute. He and his wife, Phebe D., Samuel Young and his wife Margaret, Samuel Ewing and his wife Mary, John McCullough and his wife Margaret, James Beard and his wife Jane, and O. Dibble made up the eleven charter members.

New Hope was the first church built in Sugar Creek township. It was built in 1824 by the Presbyterians of the community. Other churches were Pisgah Methodist Episcopal church, built in 1839; Bethesda Methodist Episcopal church, built in 1849, and South Vigo Congregational Church, built in 1859.

In 1822, the Union Baptist church was organized, the first church in Pierson township and the second church in Vigo county.

Hull House, in Vigo county, was

located seven miles south of Terre Haute on the east bluff of the Wabash river. It was built between 1818 and 1825. Rev. Samuel Hull, a Methodist circuit rider, was one of the early owners of the house.

Sparks' remarks

At the 1875 meeting of the Old Settlers' Association, Rev. Samuel Sparks (mentioned previously) was introduced as "one of the oldest operatives in the county," having cultivated a crop here in 1812. Mr. Sparks spoke with a loud, clear voice, though 90 years of age.

He was born eight miles from Louisville in 1786. His father had had much trouble with the Indians. One night, seven horses were stolen from him. He described the pursuit of the Indians, the theft of seven more horses, the reinforcement of the pursuing party, the attack in the night, the death of seven Indians and the recapture of the fourteen horses with fourteen guns.

Sparks spoke of the skins the people used to wear, their cedar "porridgers," wooden dishes and forks, how his father had been a trader, and he had journeyed with him through the wild country of the surrounding

states; coming in 1812, with a "ranger," and buying land from Mr. Ross.

He had been preaching for forty years, and established half a dozen Baptist churches, but had become old, and left the work to others. He closed his remarks with the statement that he "was glad to see the dear ones and was ready to meet them beyond," and there was prolonged applause.

Platted church

The original plat of Terre Haute dedicated a double lot at the northwest corner of Fourth and Poplar streets for a church. About 1833, a community church was built there. Facing Poplar street, the structure was soon outgrown, and in 1841 a new building was erected facing Fourth street. This was dedicated Oct. 3, 1841 as Asbury Chapel of the Methodist church, all the other organizations which has made use of the old church having in the meantime bought property of their own and built their own buildings.

More than half a century later, needing funds for their new building at Seventh and Poplar, a bill was filed in court asking for the appointment of a commissioner to give them a deed for the property and the lot was sold into private ownership.

In 1863, a number of the members of Asbury withdrew and formed an organization that built the church at the northeast corner of Seventh and Eagle. This was dedicated Dec. 3, 1866. It served as a temporary home for Normal School after the fire in April, 1888, but was finally demolished for the erection of a new

building. Part of the funds for the new building was derived from the sale of bricks from the old building. This new building was entirely destroyed by fire and the present structure succeeded it.

History repeated itself again in the case of the two Methodist congregations as the two earliest churches of the organization were organized in Prairieton in August, 1838. The people of the small towns and villages did not have the advantage of a court house in which they could meet, hence the need for a building of their own.

Five "Free Men of Color" organized the "African Church" here in 1839 and by 1842 had built a church building and were holding services. Much later this congregation became the Allen A.M.E. church.

The present church building is not historic in any architectural sense, but the black congregation does stem from the 1839 date.

Old Salem Baptist church was organized Sept. 26, 1846, with a donated acre of ground in Lost Creek Township. Mt. Zion dates back to 1892.

Organized in 1841 in a frame building at the southeast corner of Fourth and Ohio, the Universalist church moved to its new building on the east side of Eighth street, north of Cherry, and was dedicated in May, 1869. Finally membership dropped, and after being deserted for several years, the building became a City Library, the workshop and store of a plumbing firm, the Salvation Army, and a used car salesroom before it was finally razed to make way for the Hulman Civic University Center.

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Shakers settled in the valley

By Dorothy J. Clark

The Shakers settled in the Wabash Valley 177 years ago in northern Knox County and southern Sullivan County in 1806.

Co. J. H. E. Sprinkle bought the holdings of the Shakers and the only relics left of the Shaker sect from Shaker Prairie were a table, a mirror, a hall tree, three spoons and a knife and fork, the cherished possessions of Marie Sprinkle Sebree Collins, a retired school teacher. The items were found in the old Shaker building when it was torn down in 1838 and handed down in the family of Mrs. Collins. Her father was Dr. W. B. Sprinkle, the son of Col. Sprinkle.

About 1806 the Shaker organization in New York sent out two elders to Ohio and Kentucky, who made several converts, formed a colony of families and settled in the northwest part of Busseron Township in Knox County, Ind., and at Scottsville, a short distance west of the town of Carlisle. Two female elders soon arrived. They were necessary to make the organization complete.

In 1811 the Shakers moved back to Ohio and remained there until quiet had been restored from the effects of the War of 1812, when they returned to Shakertown in Knox County. In honor of these religious people, the large fertile prairie lying southwest of Carlisle and west of Oaktown was named Shaker Prairie. This was one of the richest agricultural sections of Knox and Sullivan counties.

Historically speaking

This peculiar sect was noted for the doctrines of its faith which held to a cooperative system of government. All of their property was held in common. Marriage was forbidden. The penalty for wedlock was expulsion from the group. When a man or woman became a member of the Shakers, any property they possessed became the property of the church, and they were required to devote their labors exclusively to the common good.

A great many people became members of the sect and spent years of hard labor towards its good, but after several years of this hard labor along with its peculiar and unnatural laws governing the sect, and the law against the intermingling of the sexes, the colony became unpopular among many of its people.

Many members married and were promptly banished from the church. Others just simply withdrew their memberships and left the community.

While industry and economy were the characteristics of the Shakers, they were successful in stock raising and horticulture and had a fruit orchard of about 40 acres. They built a saw-mill and a grist mill on Busseron Creek, both propelled by water. They made all of their own clothing as well shoes and boots. Cattle and sheep were also raised extensively.

The first house erected by the Shakers in 1820 was known as the Shaker House. It was constructed of brick, 49 by 196 feet and contained three stories with a large cellar under the whole house. There were 60 windows in the entire building, 15 in each story of the house. Each window consisted of many panes of glass eight by 10 inches in size.

The roof was combed and covered with handmade cypress shingles. The outside of the heavy poplar weatherboarding had been sawed out and made entirely by hand. The house contained 25 rooms with three large halls. One side of the house was for the men, the other for the women. There were four great chimneys, one on each corner of the house with all 21 fireplaces connected with the flues.

There were eight stairways in Shaker House. Two of them led to the cellar and two were situated on each floor of the house. The lathing was made of thick wood about three feet wide, while the surface of these were hacked to make it rough so that the plastering put over them might stick to them better.

There were four storerooms in the building which had small individual wardrobes built around the walls which were used to store personal effects of each person. Each one had a separate compartment.

There were two kitchens in the house, one for the men and the other for the women, each furnished with a fireplace.

The basement or cellar had two dungeons which were supposed to have been used for punishment of unruly or belligerent members.

The rafters and sills and other heavy timbers throughout the house were all made of burr oak. The window casings and doors were made of the finest black walnut. There were six outside doors, two at the front and back and one at each side. They were massive affairs and extra wide, hung on heavy iron

hinges five feet in length. The locks were mammoth, made of brass with heavy brass keys that weighed about three pounds each. Heavy stone steps about 12 feet in length were placed in front of each of the large entrance doors.

The angle iron on the north end of the building had the name of West Union and the date 1820.

The next year the Shakers, in 1821, erected a building solely for worship. It was situated just across the road from the first house. Its dimensions were 40 by 44 feet, a two-story structure. It was always supposed that the building was just a frame building, but when it was torn down in 1875, it was discovered that brick walls had been built between the studding in the entire building. It was constructed of the same kind of materials used in the Shaker House.

The lower floor was used as an assembly room where all religious services were held. The seats were long benches around the walls with a pulpit in the center of the room. There were no fireplaces on the first floor, but the ceiling of the first floor could be raised up and down so when heat was needed the ceiling was simply raised above the fireplaces on the second floor.

Being a very secretive organization, the Shakers gave no reason for such construction. The entire second floor of the church was used for

paraphernalia of the church and judging from the number of rooms on this floor, a large amount of it must have been used in taking in new converts to the faith.

A peculiarity of the public meetings of the Shakers occurred after the assembling and sitting awhile in silent meditation. They would be taken with a mighty trembling during which time they would express the indignation of God against all sin. At other times they were affected by a mighty shaking and would sing, shout and walk the floor under the influence of spiritual signs to expel or drive out evil things.

From these strange exercises the people received the name of Shakers. Some folks called them Shaking Quakers.

The Shakers failed in establishing a lasting community in Knox and Sullivan counties in Indiana, but it must be conceded that they were an important factor in the development of this section of the Hoosier state.

In the old Shaker Fable they tried to let the world know the message which they believed had come to them from Heaven, but people laughed and did not listen.

Disheartened, the organization broke at last. Weary of wandering over the earth in search of a resting place, weary of trying to put down homes in the savage wilderness, the Shaker settlement broke up and moved away from Shaker Prairie about 1827. One old faded book is the only record left of their religious assemblies here.

Letters to the editor

Shakers account disputed in Carolina

To the Editor: T s AUG 28 1983

Recently while visiting in Terre Haute I read an article by Dorothy Clark in your paper entitled "Shakers settled in the Valley." As a historian with some expertise in the field of Shaker history I feel I should correct some misperceptions about the Shakers presented in the article.

Ms. Clark states that the Shakers sent missionaries to Ohio and Kentucky who gathered "several" converts and with them founded a community at Busro. In 1827, according to Ms. Clark, the Shakers "weary of wandering over the earth in search of a resting place...broke up and moved away."

While this is generally a true history of Busro it unfortunately gives the impression that this was the end of the Shakers. Actually, the story of the Shakers extends far beyond Busro in time and importance. The Shakers, the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing, grew out of a general religious fervor in England in the 1740s. Nine Shakers, including their leader, "Mother" Ann Lee, came to America in 1774. From this meager beginning the United Society grew to a maximum membership of 6,000, with 17 communities including Busro. Shaker religious beliefs included celibacy, communal ownership of property, a belief that Mother Ann Lee was the female incarnation of the Christ spirit, pacifism, and in later years, abolition of slavery and equality of the sexes.

In 1805 when the Shakers sent missionaries to the West they already had 11 thriving communities in the Northeastern United States. Three missionaries were sent to the Ohio-Kentucky area because the Shakers had heard reports of the religious upheaval known to us as the Kentucky Revival. The efforts of these men were quite successful. By the time Busro was founded there were already two Shaker communities in Ohio and two in Kentucky. All of these survived into the 20th century. Shakerism as a whole was an important part of the utopian-socialist movement of the 19th century. As the longest-lived communitarian effort in the U.S. the Shaker system served as a model for other socialists. Among their visitors and admirers were Robert Owen, Bronson Alcott, Nathaniel Hawthorne, James Monroe, Andrew Jackson and William Dean Howells.

Ms. Clark's description of Busro and Shaker practices there is misleading. Her account of dungeons in the basement of the Center Family House is an often repeated but probably

apocryphal story. Although many detractors accused the Shakers of violence there is no evidence that the Shakers employed any kind of physical punishment or incarceration. Errant members were simply sent away "to the world."

Ms. Clark mentions numerous rooms on the second floor of the meeting house that were used for an unknown purpose, she suggests as a meeting place with converts. These rooms were probably the apartments of the ministry, as they were in most communities. The Elder would have lived on one side of the house, the Eldress on the other side. The ministry was required, as were all members, to do hand labor. The extra rooms would have been their workshops. Prospective converts would have more likely been interviewed in another building and then housed in their own novitiate order.

Ms. Clark claims Busro was disbanded in 1827 because "the colony became unpopular among many of its people." While apostasy was certainly a contributing factor, there were other reasons for the disintegration of Busro. The Shakers' adventure at Busro had been generally disastrous.

In the summer of 1811 the Indians and settlers maintained an uneasy peace. General William Henry Harrison and his troops set out from Vincennes, camped at Busro, then (according to a Shaker elder's account) "went up the Wabash to Tar Hote 40 miles above us where they built a garrison" and then "marched to the prophets town which was 70 miles and encamped nigh the town." This advance was the Battle of Tippecanoe, on which General Harrison built his fame and successful presidential campaign. Later in the year troops again camped on Shaker ground, this time on their way to rescue Fort Harrison from Indian attack. The Shakers finally decided to evacuate the community until peace could be concluded. General Harrison offered them safe harbor in Vincennes but they preferred to move to Shaker villages in Kentucky and Ohio.

After they returned to Busro in August 1814 the Shakers prospered for many years. But by 1825 Busro once again proved itself to be a "problem child" to the central ministry in Mt. Lebanon, N.Y. Due to a general shortage of money in the area that made it difficult to market thier crops the Shakers could not raise \$60 for taxes. They were also bothered by apostacies, as Ms. Clark indicated.

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Jesuit priests sought converts along Wabash

Clark, Dorothy & Religion (Lad)

From the time when Marquette discovered the Mississippi River in 1673 until the suspension of the Jesuits in 1773, the priests were tireless in their efforts to convert to Catholicism the Indian tribes living between the Great Lakes and the Ohio River, and the Miami and Mississippi rivers.

Historical records prove that as early as 1712 Father Gabriel Marest of the Society of Jesus passed down the Wabash River, preaching to the natives. He was followed in 1749 by Father Meurin from Quebec, who found French-Canadians at every landing.

The Rt. Rev. Bishop Brute, the first Bishop of Vincennes, went by way of Logansport, Fayetteville, Attica and Covington to Terre Haute on his return trip of 600 miles to Chicago — and probably passed down the Wabash.

The Catholic missionaries had taught the Roman Catholic faith to the Indians and French trappers on the Wabash River 100 years before the church was planted in Parke County. When the Rev. Isaac McCoy, the first man to preach Protestant Christianity in Parke County, began his work, he found the Catholic missionaries had preceded him. They had made many converts among the Indians and had attended to the spiritual needs of the Catholic French-Canadian traders and settlers.

Christmas Dasney, son of Ambrose Dasney, donated a piece of ground near Armiesburg as a Catholic cemetery. The earliest interment in this cemetery was that of Bridget Mary Dean who died Nov. 5, 1847.

The Rev. L. Lalumiere, at one time the only priest Bishop Brute had in his vast diocese of Indiana and a part of Illinois, was the first priest to begin attending to the scattered Catholics in Parke County in 1842.

There is evidence he attended those working on the Wabash & Erie Canal along with visits from the Rev. Ryan of North Arm, Ill. In 1854, mass was celebrated in the old log house of Martin Ryan by the Rev. L. Lalumiere.

In the same year, he held services in what was Rockville's first schoolhouse, a little log hut on John Silliman's place. At that time John Broderick, a railroad contractor, was working there on the Evansville & Crawfordsville Railroad.

The number of persons attending, both Catholic and Protestant, was so large that the priest had to erect the altar outside the door and preach to the audience grouped together in the yard. In 1855 services were held at Leatherwood, in the house of Mr. Weldon.

Up to 1861 the Rev. Highland, in charge of Greencastle, came to Rockville and celebrated mass in John Barry's house, between the home of David Strouse and the Christian Church.

In 1858 he held services in Hannigan's bakery, a little brick house where the "Tribune" office was built. Alternately, after that date, he said mass in the homes of James Kinney, Mr. Raggett and Pat Reardon, staying in Rockville a week or so at a time, attending to Montezuma in the old log house of James Reardon. In 1861 he became ill and retired to Terre Haute.

Historically speaking



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Clark is Vigo County's official historian and formerly worked for The Terre Haute Tribune.

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Special to The Tribune-Star

From 1861 to 1869 Rockville and Montezuma were attended by the Rt. Rev. Fintan Mundwiler, O.S.B., later Abbot of the Benedictine Monastery at St. Meinrad, and by the Rev. Chrysostom Foffa, O.S.B., and the Rev. Bede O'Connor, O.S.B., the Benedictine Fathers from Terre Haute.

In 1867 the Rev. Meinrad McCarthy, O.S.B., known as the "Church Builder," attended regularly every month or six weeks from St. Mary's and brought about a fixed church organization. He bought land in Rockville and built churches there and in Montezuma. From 1869 to 1878 the Terre Haute priests attended, particularly the Rev. H. Alerding, then assistant at St. Joseph's who later became pastor at St. Joseph's in Indianapolis.

In 1872 the Franciscan Fathers (O.M.C.) took charge at St. Joseph's in Terre Haute, and their visits continued to Rockville and Montezuma.

About 1876-77 the Rev. Quinlan built a parsonage of four rooms to the Montezuma church, and in 1878 the Rev. T. O'Donoghue became the first resident pastor there until 1879. The Rev. Riehle and the Rev. McBarron of St. Mary's filled in until the appointment of the Rev. B. Kintrup who built the bell tower and secured a bell for Montezuma.

One night in March 1882, the priest attempted to cross the Wabash River on the Indianapolis, Decatur & Western Railroad bridge at Montezuma and was overtaken by a train. In his efforts to clear the track, which had no walk for foot passengers, he fell and was drowned. His body was found the next morning, attached to a snag about two miles above Clinton. He is buried in the old cemetery at Armiesburg.

Priests from the surrounding area filled the vacancy for several years until the Rev. P. Nix of St. Joseph's took over. He built the church at Rockville in 1886 and was transferred to California the next year.

In 1887 the Rev. Riehl organized the coal miners living at Coxville and Rosedale into a congregation. In 1890 the Block Coal Co. of Brazil donated property where the Rev. Joseph Bauer built a small frame church and established a cemetery.

In 1891 Jerry Sullivan of Rosedale donated the land where a church was built the next year. In 1889 the Rev. Joseph T. Baue, living at St. Mary's, took charge of the counties of Parke, Vermillion and the extreme northeast corner of Vigo County. He built a parsonage at Rockville in 1891 and established his residence there.

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Circuit preachers served early Methodists here

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When the Methodists in the neighborhood of the present Mount Pleasant United Methodist Church, a well-known landmark on the Old Riley Road, first organized in 1835, they became part of a circuit embracing all of Vigo County, part of Parke County on the north, part of Clay County on the east, and part of Putnam County on the northeast.

At that time there was not a single frame church building owned by the Methodists in all that territory. There was a hewed log church in the Laverty settlement on the north. Preachings and class meetings were held in private homes or in schoolhouses. During the summer and on extraordinary occasions, services were held in the groves.

Thomas Ray and John St. Clare were appointed to the circuit at the conference held at Indianapolis in the fall of 1835. In May 1836, the Rev. William Stevenson's father moved his family from Philadelphia to the Packard farm.

Preaching was held at that time in the homes of John Herrington Sr., Anthony Ostrander, or in the double log house of Hiram Smith, about a quarter of a mile northeast of the present church location.

Brother Ray preached once in four weeks, and the other Sabbaths were taken care of by several local preachers in the circuit. In 1836 Aaron Wood was the presiding elder. John A. Brouse was stationed in Terre Haute, and preached in the small brick church where Asbury stood later.

During late August, a camp meeting was held about 60 rods south of where Mount Pleasant Church now stands. A number of conversions and additions to the church membership occurred at this revival. The country was filling up rapidly and thought was given to start a subscription for a church building.

The Rev. Stevenson gave an acre of ground with the privilege of getting the framing timbers from his land and \$100 in hard cash. Others gave amounts totaling \$800. Work was begun late in 1836. Timbers were hewed near the original church site. The

Historically speaking



Clark retired as The Tribune-Star women's editor in 1980. She has written a local history column for 30 years. She is Vigo County Historian.

By Dorothy J. Clark
Special to The Tribune-Star

weatherboarding was sawed on a little sawmill on Honey Creek. Mr. Popham who lived in a log house left on the campgrounds made the shingles by hand.

Stevenson couldn't recall who the builder was, but he did remember many details of its construction. The church rested on blocks until the brick underpinning was put in sometime later.

The church grounds were enclosed with a post and rail fence, quite an innovative style then in use and thought to be rather aristocratic. As the first church building in the circuit, it attracted a lot of attention.

The church had only one door in the north end and only one aisle running from the door to the pulpit. The unpainted seats extended from the aisle to the wall on either side.

There were two seats on each side of the pulpit, which was an oblong box five steps above the floor. A tall minister found his head dangerously close to the plank ceiling. The book board was high enough to reach the chest of an ordinary-sized man.

At night the best tallow candles made in the neighborhood were lit in tin sconces hung from the window frames to provide light. On the pulpit there were tin candlesticks, one on either side of the 3-foot long book board. It was common to see the preacher wet his thumb and forefinger to pick the wick of a candle to get more light on his sermon. The altar was enclosed with a balustrade.

When this church was first planned it was called "Spring Hill

Church," but on dedication day, it was named Mount Pleasant.

Brother Ray had been moved to another circuit, but he returned to preach the dedicatory sermon on the second Sunday in May 1837, 150 years ago. His text was taken from Psalms: 48-12-14. On this occasion, 150 years ago, the congregation filled the new church and the overflow listened to the services from the nearby woods.

The first members of the formal organization of this society were Elisha U. Brown and his wife; John Herrington and wife; Sarah Herrington; Julie Herrington; Hiram Smith and wife; William Stevenson and wife; Anthony Ostrander and wife; Samuel Robertson and wife; William Woolen and wife; Mrs. Isbella Jackson; and Mrs. Melvina Smith.

The new church held its first revival in the winter of 1838-39. Cornelius Swank and Thomas Bartlett, on the circuit then, began the meeting and after two weeks left it in charge of three local preachers: Brother Falkner, who lived where Brazil is now; Thomas Morrow of Putnamville; and William Evans of Pleasant Gardens.

Some of the greatest men in Methodism have preached in Mount Pleasant Church, including Matthew Simpson, Edward R. Ames, Allen Wily, L. W. Berry, Aaron Wood, William Daily and others.

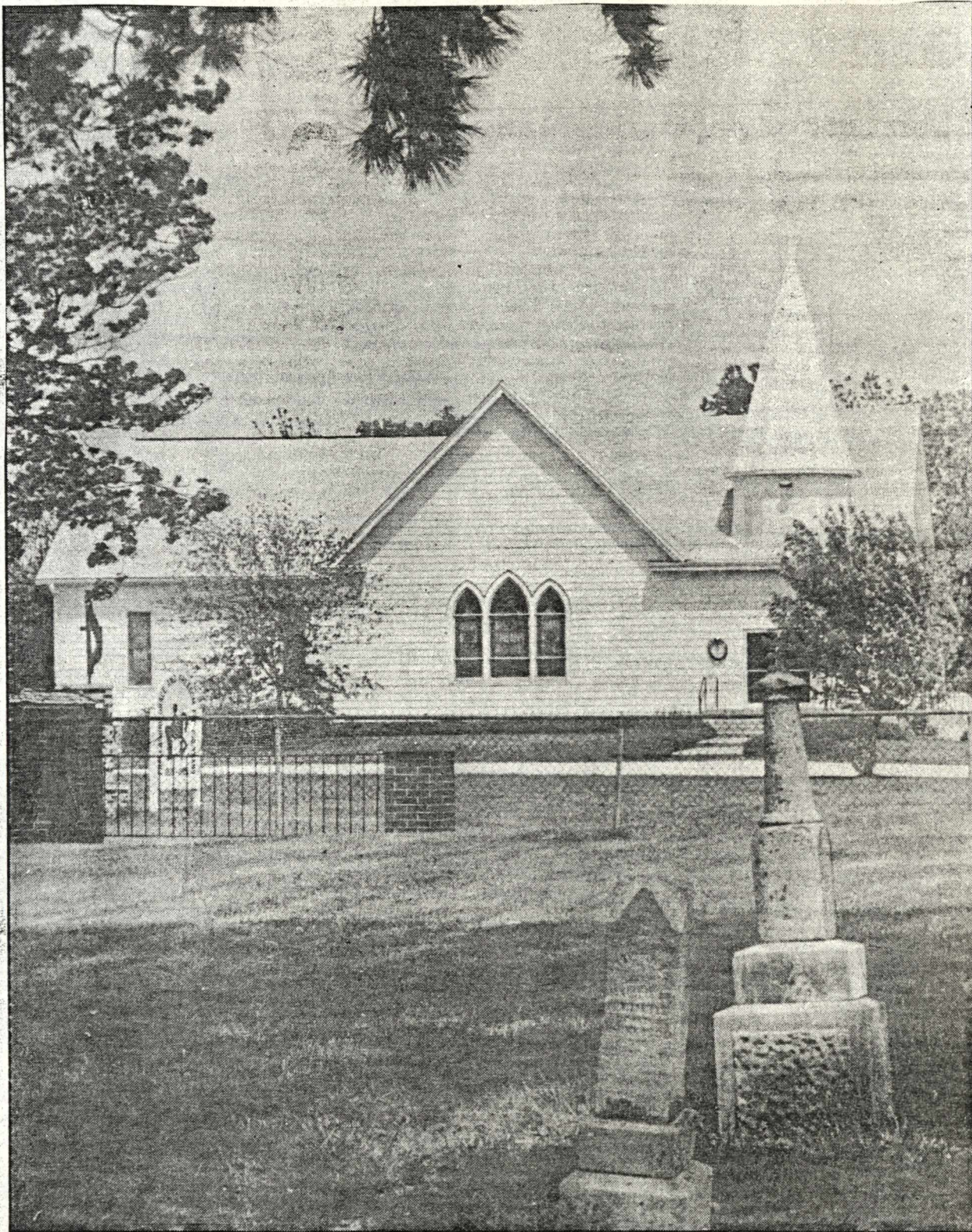
The first Sunday School was organized in May 1888. Miss Warren, who was employed as governess and private teacher for the children of W. C. Linton in the former Thompson place, was chosen superintendent.

Without organ or choir, the singing was hearty, not classical, according to Stevenson. Teachers were required to memorize the lesson and all the references for the questions. Equipment included the Methodist hymn book, a Bible and Long-King's Question Book.

Some years back, the old church survived its short move to its present location from its original position bordering the old graveyard.

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Historic shadows: Mount Pleasant United Methodist Church stands on a gentle hill south of Terre Haute on the Old Riley Road. The church was organized in 1835 when Methodists in the neighborhood became part of a circuit extending from Vigo County to parts of Parke, Clay and Putnam counties. Tombstones in the wooded cemetery reflect that historic beginning.

First church helped city grow

Spiritual center was built to attract new citizens

The story of the organization of the first church in Terre Haute was told by Col. John W. Ray, son of the Rev. Edwin Ray, as it was told to him by one of Terre Haute's pioneers, James Ross.

Over the years, the story has been checked and rechecked by various persons, and was found to be basically accurate.

Some time later, Dr. Lyman Abbott published his memoirs, first as a serial in the "Outlook," and then in book form.

In his experiences as pastor in Terre Haute, he included his version of the organization of the Congregational Church which agreed in part with the story told by "Uncle Jimmy" Ross, one of Abbott's parishioners.

The story tells how the founders of Terre Haute were from Kentucky and Tennessee and were not church-going people. They were more interested in horse racing and other sports. But they had land to sell and wanted to build up a substantial and prosperous community.

This local historian begs to differ with this thinking. Most of the founders of Terre Haute were New Englanders, and those from Virginia and Maryland. The Kentucky and Tennessee people came later.

When the National Road opened, settlers seeking new homes came

Historically speaking



Clark retired as The Tribune-Star women's editor in 1980. She has written a local history column for 30 years. She is Vigo County Historian.

By Dorothy J. Clark
Special to The Tribune-Star

from Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York, ready to start anew when a suitable location was found.

Most of these people were church-going, family-oriented groups. They paused briefly in Terre Haute, looked it over, and moved on. They were not willing to rear families in a churchless community.

Promoters of the town, finding that they were failing to attract the most desirable of the home seekers, got together and decided to build a church, just as they might have decided to build a bridge, or gravel road, or any other civic improvement. With one exception, they were not church-goers, but realized that a church is a community asset.

Basically this is the story related to Ray by James Ross, who added that he was the only one of the

original trustees who had ever had any church affiliation, but that he lived to see all of the others come into the church.

Abbott did not refer to the loss of desirable emigrants as the reason for church organization here, but confirms the tradition that the step was taken from commercial rather than religious motives. He stated that the man who presided at the first meeting was a gambler.

The two stories agree that a church was needed and that a preacher looking for a pulpit came along at the right time.

A town lot was reserved for a church in the original town plat. However, the first church did not use the lot. Later, Asbury Chapel was built there.

It was Abbott who identified this commercially-inspired church with the Congregational Church of which he was pastor. Home missionaries of all the church denominations visited Terre Haute from time to time and held services in the courthouse, school, halls, and private homes. Presbyterians were early on the scene in 1817 near the Illinois line.

When the Congregational Church was organized, many townspeople transferred their allegiance. The ladies needed a place to show off Easter bonnets. The men believed the church would attract business people and leading

citizens backed any enterprise which might help the town grow.

The Rev. Merrick A. Jewett, a young Congregational minister, visited Terre Haute and was persuaded to remain and organize a church. This organization was perfected on Dec. 30, 1834.

An eloquent and highly-educated young man, the Rev. Jewett attracted the leading citizens, so the wise heads and town-pushers urged him to stay and backed his enterprise with their money.

They insisted upon controlling the election of officers by holding majorities on the boards and controlling the secular business of the church. After all, it was their money they were risking.

Jewett remained here until 1860. He was followed by Abbott who wrote down the history of the church as he saw it and others remembered it and told him about it.

Whether or not the "well known gambler" chaired the first meeting is not important. What is important is that after 18 years from its founding in 1816, Terre Haute still had only 800 people. If a church was needed to attract citizens, then let's get together and build one was the sentiment of the founders.

If all the city's problems could be settled in such business-like ways today!

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Frontier people were religious

** Clark, Dorothy*
TS 9/5/93
 The great majority of the frontier people of the Old Northwest were sober, industrious, and law-abiding. As soon as the families reached their destinations, they began to worship together.

When the Northwest Territory was first organized, there was a Catholic church at Detroit, another one at the River Raisin, and a mission at Mackinaw.

The immigrants at Marietta, true to Puritan tradition, founded a Congregational church in the first few months of their settlements. In their main strongholds in the Ohio Valley, the Scotch-Irish settlers who came from the Atlantic coast, from Kentucky, and from western Pennsylvania, soon established Presbyterian congregations.

Of the Calvinistic churches, the most popular by far was the Baptist faith, which had strongly entrenched itself in Kentucky before settlement began in the Northwest Territory. Its extremely democratic organization suited the settlers, and the Baptists soon spread north of the Ohio river.

Historically speaking



Clark retired as the Tribune-Star's women's editor in 1980. She has written a local history column since 1956. She is Vigo County historian.

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Special to the Tribune-Star

Of the non-Calvinistic denominations that were organized among the early settlers, the Episcopal church made the least progress. This was to be expected, for it had been the privileged church of the Southern colonies, and its ritualism was not likely to appeal to the democratic Westerners who had sprung so largely from the masses.

The Quakers were neither so numerous nor even so widespread as the Presbyterians, but they exerted influence in the Old Northwest that was far out of proportion to their actual membership. The bulk of them came from the Carolinas and Georgia, entire meetings moving north of

the Ohio because of their anti-slavery views.

The Methodists, however, were by far the most popular and influential denomination in the Old Northwest. An important factor in the swift spread of religion was the practical sense and aggressiveness of the ministers in the early years of settlement. Not particular about the place of worship, they frequently held services in groves, with congregations sitting around on logs, or else they officiated in the cabins of the pioneers.

Two smaller religious organizations were the Mormons and the Shakers. The Mormons who settled in northeastern Ohio, moved to Missouri because of the prejudices and persecutions against them. The Shaker congregations dwindled because of their belief in celibacy.

The beginning of the 19th century brought one of the most curious backyard institutions — the camp-meeting revival. These camp-meetings were usually planned and managed by Methodist circuit riders or Baptist itinerant preachers. When the news went abroad that such a meeting was to take place, people flocked to the scene from far and near, in wagons, on horseback, and on foot.

Though there were many back-sliders among those con-

verted, there were those who remained spiritually changed, and in time hundreds of meeting houses dotted the landscape from the Alleghenies to the Mississippi.

Nor was education neglected. Many of the settlers especially those from the South, were illiterate. But all who made any pretense of respectability were anxious to give their children an opportunity to learn to read and write.

Accordingly, wherever half a dozen families lived reasonably close together, a log schoolhouse was sure to be found. Sometimes a wandering teacher would find his way into a community and, being hired to give instruction for two or three months during the winter, would "board around" among the residents and take such additional pay as he could get.

More often, someone of the settlers who was fortunate

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determined by drawing lots.

Another rule read that if a drop of tallow was spilt on a book from the candles which were in general use, or if a leaf was folded over, there would be a fine of 3 cents.

Just plain living took a great deal of ingenuity and resourcefulness to survive in the Old Northwest. Pioneer Ezra Cole told about the first money he had was a dollar that his father paid him for a bushel of wheat that he had picked out of the stubble, one or two kernels at a time.

With this dollar he bought a ewe lamb which his father agreed to keep. He would give him all the ewe lambs and keep all the buck lambs and wool himself. The first year his ewe had two ewes and the next year she had four, which made seven sheep he owned in two years.

In a few years he sold enough sheep to buy a yearling colt, and he still had 10 ewe sheep left. By

the time he was married, he had a 4-year-old horse, a cow and 20 sheep. He sold the horse for \$80 which paid for a yoke of oxen to go on a new farm. He kept the cow.

At this time the younger Coles wanted to go West, but their parents wouldn't consent, so they bought 100 acres at \$5 an acre and payable in ten years, giving the right to pay the interest in road work. They were 36 miles from home.

The young couple did most of the cooking and baking outside in a tin box. They used a big stump covered with brush for an oven. They began the task of getting a few acres ready for wheat in the fall, but the mosquitoes and gnats drove them wild. They greased themselves with pork fat and this trapped them. As long as they had enough pork fat, they were safe.

enough to possess the rudiments of an education undertook the role of schoolmaster in the interval between autumn corn gathering and the spring plowing and planting.

The first school in Marietta was conducted in a blockhouse in 1789, and Manchester on the Ohio River had a school by 1796. In the Illinois settlements, American immigrants started a school in 1783 at New Design, and in 1806 another one at Belleville taught surveying, mathematics and science.

Along with the desire for learning came the craving for books, and libraries began to be established in the Old Northwest. The Dayton Library Society, incorporated in 1805, first established its headquarters in the town post office. The eagerness of the backwoods readers to have a "first look" at a new book led to an interesting rule ... that this lucky person would be